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ABSTRACT

In Nebraska, where nearly 70% of elementary school districts are rural, there is much debate about whether students from small rural schools have educational opportunities equal to those of students from town or city schools. This paper compares the performance, participation, and behavior of high school juniors who attended elementary schools in different types of school districts in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. Subjects were 26 juniors who had attended Grades K-8 in Class I elementary schools (those in a school district maintaining only elementary grades under the supervision of a single school board) and 26 juniors who attended elementary schools in unified school districts, matched for IQ scores. For each student, the high school principal or superintendent provided information on achievement test composite score, grade point average, participation and letter achievement in sports, participation and office holding in school organizations, attendance, and disciplinary referrals. T tests were conducted to compare the outcomes of the two groups. There was no significant difference between the two groups in any area investigated. The principal questionnaire is included. (SV)

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Scotts Bluff County Nebraska Juniors Educated in Class I Elementary Schools v. Juniors Educated in Class II or Class III Elementary Schools

A Field Study

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Kearney State College

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for

the Specialist Degree

by

La Rita Van Boskirk

April 15, 1989

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ABSTRACT

Scotts Bluff County Nebraska Juniors Educated in Class I Elementary Schools v. Juniors Educated in Class II or Class III Elementary Schools

La Rita Van Boskirk

Academic and athletic performance, as well as leadership skills, attendance and behavior of twenty-six high school juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools, kindergarten through eighth grade, in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska were investigated to determine if those students were disadvantaged in a larger high school setting. As a result of data gathered by questionnaires from high school administrators about those twenty-six high school juniors and about twenty- six high school juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools, it was determined that the students from Class I elementary schools were similar in all investigated areas to their counterparts from Class II and Class III schools.

Academic performance was measured by computing and comparing achievement test composite percentiles and G.P.A.s. Athletic performance was measured by computing and comparing participation in sports and earning letters in sports. Leadership skills were measured by computing and comparing participation in school organizations as well as

computing and comparing the number of offices held in school organizations. The number of days absent and the number of disciplinary referrals were computed and compared for each group.

As a result of this study, the researcher discovered that there was no significant difference between the two groups in any of the areas of concern investigated.

Chapter 1

The Proposal

Introduction

"Well into this century, America's public education system was dominated by rural schools."[1] In an age before calculators, television and computers, thousands of children learned arithmetic, civics, geography, reading and other lessons in the small rural schools. "In most cases, students learned independently and progressed at their own rate."[2] It was from the small country school of the past that impetus was given for many educational innovations of today.

There is a belief held by many--educators, state board of education members, legislators, the general public--that while today's educational system is a result of the earlier rural schools, there is no place in today's educational system for those rural schools. It is believed by many "that students from ... rural schools receive an inferior education compared to students"[3] from urban schools. Several political segments in the state of Nebraska have criticized the rural schools in Nebraska, putting those interested in and involved in rural education on the defensive.[4]

In 1960 National Education Association conducted resarch on the operation of small elementary schools and found them to be lagging behind their urban elementary

school counterparts in the areas of degreed teachers, facilities and instructional materials. In 1984, Dr. Ivan Muse, Kevin T. Ho and Ralph B. Smith, from Brigham Young University, conducted a study on rural schools in America which found that major improvements had occurred since the 1960 NEA study. Foremost among those findings were:

1. The majority of teachers (over 93 per cent) hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
2. School building facilities had improved considerably from the 1960 report. In 1984, 95 percent of the schools had indoor toilet facilities and a majority of schools reported that they have adequate cloakrooms, storage rooms and play areas.
3. Common instructional aids were available. Approximately 30 percent of the teachers made frequent use of both television and computer equipment in the classroom for instructional purposes.
4. It was also found that the remaining schools serve a community need to remain in contact with the education of their children. Parents give strong support to these schools. To close a number of

> these schools would also result in students being bussed considerable distances or even being forced to board in another community to attend school.[5]

In 1984, Muse, Ho and Smith found that the small rural schools had made sizeable strides toward becoming more educationally sound. However, Muse, Ho and Smith concluded that there was a need for research examining the performance of high school students who had received their elementary education from rural schools. Thus, in 1985 Muse, Ho and Smith conducted a study titled "The Performance of Students from Small Country Elementary Schools When They Attend High School," the purpose of which was to determine how successfully students from rural elementary schools were performing at the high school level. Interest focused on the academic and social performance of those high school students. From their study in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, Muse, Ho and Smith generalized as follows:

1. Students tend to be clustered near the average for all students in the school. In essence, the small school elementary students are academically similar to their town and city counterparts.
2. A number of the senior students who graduated from small elementary schools

had scored well above the average on tests such as the ACT. In one school the highest score, twenty-seven, was from a small-school student and the third highest score (twenty-four) was also from a small-school student.

3. Small-school students tend to have a difficult time adjusting their first year of high school, as reported by students and school staff. After the first year, there is no difference between the behavior of these students and others.

4. Very few small-school students drop out of high school or are considered to be disruptive.

5. The majority of the small-school students reported their elementary school experiences to be worthwhile and not a disad vantage to their high school performance. A number of students expressed, however, that they would have preferred more students in elementary school in order to participate in team sports and activites.

6. School staff and administrators at the

> high schools were uniform in reporting the small school students to be as effective in school as other students. They all reported that student behavior was very good.[6]

Muse, Ho and Smith recommended that more studies be conducted with larger numbers of schools and more representative samples from rural elementary schools.

Nebraska is a state with 927 school districts, 622 of which are rural elementary school districts.[7] Within the state there is much debate as to whether students from small rural schools have exposure to educational opportunities equal to those of students who attend town or city schools. The recommendation made by Muse, Ho and Smith, coupled with the highly emotional controversy over the quality of elementary rural education and the perennial discussion of school consolidation, as well as the closing of the small country schools, formulate the purpose of this study.

Statement of the Problem

This study proposes to compare the performance of Scottsbluff County, Nebraska High school juniors who attended Class I elementary schools to those who attended Class II and Class III elementary schools. The purpose of this study is to ascertain if there is any difference in the

performance of those juniors in the areas of 1) academics, 2) athletics, 3) leadership skills, 4) attendance, 5) discipline.

Specific Questions to be Answered by the Present Study

Specific empirical questions to be answered by this study were:

1. Is there a significant difference between the academic performance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

2. Is there a significant difference between the athletic performance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

3. Is there a significant difference between the performance of leadership skills of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

4. Is there a significant difference between the school attendance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and

those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

5. Is there a significant difference between the behavior (pertaining to discipline) of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

Obtaining Review of Related Literature

The review of literature reported the area of rural schools and their role in today's education in general. It also reported the area of high school students' performance, based upon rural or urban elementary education, in particular. The reference search was based upon information secured from:

1. Educational Index
2. Current Index to Journals in Education
3. ERIC Catalog (RIE)
4. NEB/CRESS Newsletters

Significance of the Study

Because the quality of education and the improvement of instruction are central to school administrators, the study of the performance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who received elementary education from Class I

schools compared with those juniors who received elementary education from Class II and Class III schools is probably one of the most relevant studies in the area of educational administration. The results provided information concerning the educational soundness of Class I schools. The researcher learned the extent to which Class I schools compare to Class II and Class III schools in providing elementary education to Scottsbluff County, Nebraska students. The results of the study will be useful in estimating the wisdom of forced consolidation and reorganization; in establishing performance-based accreditation; in evaluating and reorganizing the system of school finance in the state of Nebraska.

Novelty of the Study

A comprehensive review of related literature has so far revealed no studies on the perceived quality of elementary education offered in Class I schools compared with the perceived quality of elementary education offered in Class II and Class III schools in Scotts Bluff County. No studies have been found comparing Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska high school juniors who received elementary education from Class I schools with those who received elementary education from Class II and Class III schools.

Method of Research

Administrators from all high schools in Scotts Bluff County received a telephone call to determine the number of juniors in each school who had been educated in a Class I elementary school. After determining the number from each school, names of juniors from that school who had been educated in Class II and III elementary schools were arranged alphabetically and matched by I. Q. with those from Class I schools. Each administrator received a survey instrument and a cover letter as shown in the appendix. The instrument is designed to assess the performance of each selected high school junior. After one week's time, follow-up postcards were be mailed to the administrators who failed to complete and return the survey instrument. No second follow-up was implemented.

Analysis of Data

Data analysis to answer the five research questions posed earlier were as follows:

Q1. Is there a significant difference between the academic performance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

A1.1 Answer to this question was provided by computing and comparing average achievement composite percentile scores for students from Class I ele mentary education with those of students from Class II and Class III elementary education. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure *t* test.

A1.2 Answer to this question was provided by computing and comparing GPAs for students from Class I elementary education with those of students from Class II and Class III elementary education. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure *t* test.

Q2. Is there a significant difference between the athletic performance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

A2.1 Answer to this question was provided by determining the number of sports in which the student participates and comparing those who attended elementary school in Class I schools to those who

attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure *t* test.

A2.2 Answer to this question was provided by determining the number of sports in which the student has lettered and comparing those who attended elementary school in a Class I school with those who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III Schools. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure *t* test.

Q3. Is there a significant difference between the performance of leadership skills of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

3.1 Participation in school organizations

3.2 Holding an office in school organizations

A3.1 Answer to this question was provided by determining the number of organizations in which the student participates and comparing those who attended elementary school in Class I schools to those who attended elementary school in Class II

and Class III schools. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure t test.

A3.2 Answer to this question was provided by determining the number of offices held by the student and comparing those who attended elementary school in a Class I school with those who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure t test.

Q4. Is there a significant difference between the school attendance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

A4. Answer to this question was provided by computing and comparing average number of days absent of students who attended elementary school in Class I schools to those who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure t test.

Q5. Is there a significant difference between the be-

havior (pertaining to discipline) of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended elementary school in Class I schools and those juniors who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools?

A5. Answer to this question was provided by computing and comparing the average number of disciplinary referrals to the principal or school disciplinarian for students who attended elementary school in Class I schools to those who attended Class II and Class III schools. The significant difference between the averages was determined by using the independent-measure t test.

Definition of Terms

Class I School District:	Class I shall include any school district that maintained only elementary grades up to the eighth grade under the direction of a single school board.
Class II School District:	Class II shall include any school district embracing territory having a population of one thousand inhabitants or less that maintained both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board.

Class III School District:	Class III shall include any school district embracing territory with a population of more than one thousand and less than one hundred thousand inhabitants that maintained both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board.[8]
Standardized Achievement Tests:	These tests are a survey of basic skills in basic curriculum areas for grades K-12, designed to survey students' general academic achievement.
Independent-measure *t* Test:	This method tests the significant difference between two averages. The *t* test was performed by the following steps: 1) the *t*-statistic was either found by the use of a calculator or computer; 2) a df value was selected from computer data or a table and was used to find the critical value in the *t*-table which a .05 level was used for significance; and 3) if *t* was greater than a critical value at .05 then the difference between the two average scores found earlier was significant, otherwise the findings were not significant.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Never before in the history of education has there been greater attention placed on the improvement of education. "The 'excellence' movement is one that will definitely carry forward into the next decade."[9] Because of the release of "Rural Education and Rural Family Education Policy for the 1980's" by the United States of Department of Education, rural education has received increased attention.

In the past, research pertaining to rural schools has been incomplete and inadequate. Good research has been conducted, but there has not been enough of it. Compared to the study of urban education, the study of rural education has been almost untouched.

"In the past, relatively few educational researchers have taken an interest in the needs and problems of America's rural schools, despite the fact that a large number of America's youngsters attend schools classified as rural. In fact, depending on one's definition of rural, as many as two-thirds of the nation's 16,000 school districts are considered to be rural districts and these enroll up to one-third of all public school students in the United States. Furthermore, with the decline in district consolidation and the current population shift to non-metropolitan areas, it

is clearly evident that rural schools will continue to play a significant role in the future educationl development of a large segment of our society."[10]

"Current educational research efforts are examining rural/urban differences in achievement, appropriateness of rural/urban achievement, effects of parents and community on the attainment of rural students, and how well rural students succeed in higher education."[11] David E Brown, in Communities: A Report on Dropping Out, states that rural youths "restrict themselves when going on to the job market and on to higher education...,"[12] which he attributes to low family expectations and limited views of occupational roles. However, Everett D. Edington and Lyle Koehler in "Rural Student Achievement: Elements for Consideration," say that contrary conclusions have been determined. Smaller communities do tend to generate more community activity. "Rurality compresses the energy of a community. The school is the center of the community activity.... Rural schools represent the history of the community."[13]"This, in turn ...provides the students with a greater feeling of belonging to something in which they can participate and thus possess a better self-concept.",[14] which can lead through the "effective schools" movement to the argument that rural students therefore are achieving more, not less, than their urban peers.

The "effective schools" movement has received consid-

erable attention in the past few years. "Recent research on effective schools recognizes the value of strong community support, manageable school size and close interpersonal relationships between students and teachers,..."[15] Most educators agree that these qualities have been inherent in rural education.

For over 100 years, in our country, rural school education has been treated as if it were an unwanted stepchild. "Politicians and educators have scolded rural communities for failing to organize into tidy units...and for failing to consolidate in the interest of efficiency."[16] In 1959, James B. Conant strongly emphasized the inefficiency of the rural schools. However, recently some educators have begun to question the wisdom of forcing rural schools into a mold they do not fit. They have begun to ask whether bigger necessarily means better, as it relates to education.

Many attempts are being made to ensure equal educational opportuites in urban and rural school settings. A Vermont school district has implemented the practice of the entire district using the same reading, language arts, and mathematices textbooks whether the school is urban or rural, thus at least ensuring equality of textbooks. The school district also established one unifying educational goal "that students have such basic skills as reading, writing and arithmetic."[17]

Generally speaking in the "effective school research"

it has been found that schools in which all children achieve have several common characteristics: "1) safe and orderly environment; 2) clear school mission; 3) instructional lead ership of the principal; 4) high expectations for student achievement; 5) student opportunity to learn and time on task; 6) frequent monitoring of student progress; and 7) supportive home-school relations."[18] These characteristics, along with an "emphasis on higher order thinking skills, small class size, closeness of teachers to students, good student attendance,...development of good work ethic,"[19] have been shown to be significant. Size of school does not appear to be significant.

In "A Study of the Perceived Effectiveness of Kansas Small Schools" conducted by Jerry G. Horn of Kansas State University the above characteristics to measure effectiveness of Kansas rural schools were used. There was found "no evidence... that indicates these schools are doing an inferior job. In fact, there is some evidence that they are doing much better than average,".[20]

A 1960 NEA study found the small rural school lagging behind its urban counterpart; however Dr. Ivan Muse, Kevin T. Ho and Ralph Smith of Brigham Young University in a 1985 "Study of the Performance of Students From Small Country Elementary Schools When They Attend High School," found data to indicate that these schools had made tremedous improvement toward becoming more educationally sound. The

study was conducted in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska.

> "'Effectiveness' of schools is a hard thing to measure. This difficulty stems from the fact that it is dirricult to separate what happens in school from what happens in other settings in each student's life. We can not say that the apparent "maturity" exhibited by the studetns in the study is caused by going to a one-room elementary school, nor can we attribute higher drop-out rates shown by "city" students to the elementary school imfluences that they encountered. There are just too many factors in a student's life that have an influence on his performance in school. About the only thing that can be measured with any degree of standardization is academic achievement. As standardized and regimented as it is, measuring achievement is by no means perfect or universally accepted. In addition it only measures a small part of the student's experience in school."[21]

It is important to keep these limitations and controversies in mind while examining the results of this study. Muse, Ho and Smith sought to determine if the small-school student was disadvantaged or deprived in any way for having attended a small elementary school. They were not interested in establishing whether their performance was superior to that of students from larger elementary schools. They did not believe it was a requirement that rural schools be better than their city counterparts, only that they be as good.

Muse, Ho and Smith revealed:

1. students clustered near the average for all students in the school;
2. a number of senior students who graduated from rural elementary schools scored

well above the average on national tests;

3. rural school students had a difficult time adjusting during high school;
4. very few rural school students dropped out of high school or were considered disruptive;
5. the majority of rural school students reported their elementary school experiences worthwhile and not a disadvantage to their high school performance;
6. a number of students wished there had been more students in their elementary school in order to participate in team sports and activities;
7. school staff and administrators at the high schools uniformly reported the small-school students were as effective in school as other students and that their behavior was very good.[22]

From the data they collected, Muse, Ho and Smith disclosed the following:

1. the rural school elementary students were academically similar to their town or city school counterparts;
2. a number of senior students who grad-

uated from small elementary schools scored well above the average on tests such as ACT;

3. rural school students tended to have a difficult time adjusting their first year of high school;
4. very few rural school students dropped out of high school or were considered disruptive;
5. the majority of the rural school students reported their elementary school experiences worthwhile and not a disadvantage to their high school performance; and
6. school staff and administrators reported that the rural school students were as effective in school as other students and that their behavior was very good.[23]

Muse, Ho and Smith recommended more research be conducted to examine the performance of students from rural schools when they attend high schools. They strongly urged researching to discover the answers to the following questions:

1. How do students from small elementary schools tend to perform on high school achievement tests?

2. Do students from small elementary schools feel that they have had a good basic education?
3. Are students from small elementary schools active in social events at school?
4. Do students from small elementary schools tend to display more disruptive behavior than other students?
5. Do high school staff have concerns about the performance of small elementary school students?[24]

Howard Hanson, a graduate student at Kearney State College, Kearney, Nebraska, conducted "A Study of the Performance of Students Enrolled in High Schools in Lincoln County, Nebraska That Have Attended a Class I School District." The study was conducted with high school seniors from Lincoln County, Nebraska who had received elementary education in Class I schools and who were randomly matched with seniors who had received elementary education in Class II or Class III schools. "It was found that no difference in educational advantage existed between the student who attended a Class I elementary school and his counterpart who attended an elementary school in a unified district."[25] Class I students and their counterparts participated in and competed in the same types of extra-curricular activities. There was no significant difference in academic achievement

nor in the factor of discipline. It was recommended by Hanson that more studies be conducted within the schools of Nebraska pertaining to the performance of high school students who had received Class I elementary education in comparison to those who had received Class II or Class III elementary education.[26]

Chapter 3

Analysis of Data

This chapter presented the data collected and analysis of the data. The data collected were to determine how the performance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who were educated in Class I elementary schools compared to the performance of juniors in Scotts Bluff County who were educated in Class II and Class III elementary schools.

Of the fifty-two Scotts Bluff County high school juniors surveyed, twenty-six had received elementary education (kindergarten through eighth grade) in Class I schools. The other twenty-six juniors had received elementary education in Class II or Class III schools, and were selected by the alphabetical arrangement of names and the matching of I.Q.s to the juniors who had received elementary education in Class I schools. Scotts Bluff County has six high schools; however, one high school had no juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools and one high school chose not to participate. Of the five high schools eligible to participate (eligibility being determined by having enrolled at least one junior who had attended Class I elementary schools), four (80 %) did participate. Administrators from those four high schools responded to the survey instrument.

High school administrators were asked to provide information pertaining to the performance of the fifty-two juniors in the areas of 1) academics, 2) athletics, 3) leadership skills, 4) attendance, and 5) discipline.

All research questions were analyzed separately. Research question one was used to identify the difference in academic performance between high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended Class I elementary schools, kindergarten through eighth grade, and those juniors who attended Class II and Class III elementary schools.

This question was answered, in part, by comparing and computing average achievement composite percentile scores for juniors from Class I elementary education to those of juniors from Class II and Class III elementary education. The independent-measure *t* test was used to analyze the results. The results were illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of the Achievement Test Composite Percentile Scores of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to Those Scores of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	64.19	22.89
Class II	62.88	23.79

The difference between 64.19 and 62.88 is not significant, t (50) = 0.20, $p > .05$.

The average composite percentile score of juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools was 64.19 with a standard deviation of 22.89, which indicates the degree of dispersion of the composite scores from the average within the Class I student group, while the average composite percentile score of juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools was 62.88 with a dispersion from the mean of 23.79. The highest score attained by a junior from a Class I elementary school was the ninety-sixth percentile, while the highest score attained by a junior from a Class II or Class III school was the ninety-ninth percentile. The lowest score earned by a junior from a Class I school was the seventeenth percentile, while the lowest score earned by a junior from a Class II or Class III school was the twenty-first percentile. However, because of

the ranking of the majority of percentiles, the difference between the average composite percentile scores of the two groups was not significant.

Research question one, pertaining to the academic performance, was also answered by computing and comparing G.P.A.s for those juniors from Class I elementary education to those of juniors from Class II and Class III elementary education. The independent-measure *t* test was used to analyze the results. See Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of G.P.A.s of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to G.P.A.s of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	3.026	.59
Class II	2.933	.78

The difference between 3.026 and 2.933 is not significant, t (50) = .50, $p > .05$.

Juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools had an average G.P.A. of 3.026 with a standard deviation of only .59. The average G.P.A. of juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools was 2.933 with a variance of .78 from that average. The highest G.P.A earned by

a junior from a Class I elementary school was 3.88, while 3.77 was the highest G.P.A. earned by a junior from a Class II or Class III school. The lowest G.P.A. earned by a junior who was educated in a Class I elementary school was 1.13; the lowest G.P.A. earned by a junior who was educated in a Class II or Class III elementary school was .73. From Class I schools, fifteen juniors attained G.P.A.s equal to or greater than 3.0, ten juniors earned G.P.A.s equal to or greater than 2.0, and one junior had a G.P.A. less than 2.0. Those G.P.A.s were compared to the following G.P.A.s of the juniors from Class II and Class III schools: fifteen juniors had G.P.A.s equal to or greater than 3.0, nine juniors had G.P.A.s equal to or greater than 2.0, and two juniors had G.P.A.s lower than 2.0. The G.P.A.s for each group were averaged and the difference between the average G.P.A.s of the two groups was not significant.

Research question two was used to determine whether or not there was a difference in athletic performance between high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County who attended Class I elementary schools, kindergarten through eighth grade, and those juniors who attended Class II and Class III elementary schools.

The question was answered, in part, by determining the number of sports in which juniors from each group partici pated. The independent-measure *t* test was used to analyze the results, which were illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparison of Sports Participation of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to Sports Participation of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	.77	1.01
Class II	.88	1.08

The difference between .77 and .88 is not significant, t (50) = .40, p > .05.

The average number of sports in which juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools participated was .77. The quantitative measure which defines the extent to which the number of sports in which students from Class I elementary schools was dispersed is 1.01. The average number of sports in which juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools was .88 and the dispersion of the number of sports in that student group was 1.08. The most sports in which any junior from both the Class I elementary education group and the Class II and Class III elementary education group were three; the least sports in which any junior from either group participated was zero. Participation in sports by juniors from Class I background was as follows: fifteen participated in zero sports, four were in

one sport, five were in two sports, and two were in three sports. Participation in sports by juniors from Class II and Class III schools was as follows: fourteen participated in zero sports, four participated in one sport, five were in two sports, and three were in three sports. Even though there was less participation in sports by the students from Class I schools, the difference between the average number of sports in which juniors from the two groups participated was not significant.

The second research question pertaining to athletic performance of those fifty-two juniors surveyed, was answered, in part, by determining the number of sports in which each junior lettered. The results were analyzed by using the independent-measure *t* test. See Table 4.

Table 4

Comparison of Number of Letters Earned in Sports by Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to the Number of Letters Earned in Sports by Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	.98	.84
Class II	.88	1.09

The difference between .98 and .88 is not significant, t (50) = 1.0, $p > .05$.

The average number of sports in which juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools lettered, was .98 with a variance of .84. The average number of sports in which juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools lettered, was .88 and the variance was 1.09. Juniors with Class I elementary background earned letters in sports as follows: seventeen earned no letters at all, three earned one letter, six earned two letters, and none earned three letters. Juniors with Class II and Class III elementary backgrounds earned sports letters as follows: fifteen earned zero letters, three earned one letter, five earned two letters and three earned three letters. The difference between the average numbers of sports in which letters were earned for the two groups was not significant; however, the juniors coming from Class II amd Class III schools did earn

more letters.

Research question three was used to identify whether or not there was a difference in leadership skills between the high school juniors from Class I elementary education and those from Class II and Class III elementary education. The question was answered by identifying and comparing the number of school organizations in which juniors from each group participated (see Table 5), and by identifying and comparing the number of offices held in school organizations by those same juniors. (Results shown in Table 6.) The independent-measure *t* test was used to analyze the results.

Table 5

Comparison of School Organization Participation of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to School Organization Participation of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	1.19	.56
Class II	1.19	.39

The difference between 1.19 and 1.19 is not significant, t (50) = 0, $p > .05$.

Juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools participated in an average of 1.19 school organizations with the degree of dispersion equal to .55 and the The average

number of school organizations in which juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools participated was also 1.19 with a degree of dispersion of .39. Juniors from Class I elementary education had more who participated in zero to three organizations than did the other group. There were twenty-one from the Class I student group and nineteen from the Class II and Class III student group. Four juniors from Class I elementary schools participated in four to seven school organizations while seven juniors from Class II and Class III elementary schools participated in four to seven school organizaitons. One junior from a Class I elemetnary school participated in eight to ten school organizations and no juniors from Class II and Class II elementary schools participated in that many school organizations. The difference between the average numbers of school orgnaizations in which juniors from the two groups participated was not significant.

Table 6

Comparison of the Number of Offices Held in School Organizations by Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to the Number of Offices Held in School Organizations by Scotts Bluff County Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	.35	.62
Class II	.38	.56

The difference between .35 and .38 is not significant, t (50) = .23, $p > .05$.

The average number of school organizations in which juniors, who attended Class I elementary schools, held office was .35 with a root-mean-square deviation (standard deviation) of .62. The average number of school organizations in which juniors, who attended Class II and Class III elementary schools, held office was .38 with a root-mean-square deviation of .56. Juniors from Class I elementary schools held offices in school organizations as follows: twenty-three held no offices, two held one office, and one held two offices. The group from Class II and CLass III elementary schools held school organization offices as follows: eighteen were not an officer in any organizaiton, seven were officers in one organization and one was an officer in two organizations. While there are some differences in the numbers of juniors holding office, the differ-

ence between the average number of offices held in school organizations by the two groups was not significant.

Research question four was used to identify and compare school attendance of juniors from each elementary background investigated in this study.

This question was answered by computing and comparing the average number of days absent of students who attended elementary school in Class I schools to those who attended elementary school in Class II and Class III schools. The independent-measure *t* test was used to analyze the results. Results were illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7

Comparison of Number of Days Absent of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to Number of Days Absent of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	1.9	1.3
Class II	2.4	1.3

The difference between 1.9 and 2.4 is not significant, t (50) = 1.4, $p > .05$.

The average number of days absent from school of juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools was 1.9. The average number of days absent from school of juniors who

had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools was 2.4. Of the twenty-six juniors who attended Class I elementary schools, thirteen were absent from school three or fewer days, five were absent four or five days, five were absent six to eight days and three were absent more than eight days. Of the same number of juniors who attended Class II and Class III elementary schools, ten were absent zero to three days, four were absent four or five days, three were absent six to eight days and nine were absent more than eight days. Even though more students from the Class II and Class III group were absent a greater number of days, statistically, the difference between the average number of days absent of the two groups was not significant.

Research question five was used to identify and compare behavior of juniors from each elementary school group being studied.

This question was answered by ascertaining and comparing the number of disciplinary referrals to the school disciplinarian of each group. The independent-measure *t* test was used to analyze the results which were displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison of Number of Disciplinary Referrals of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class I Elementary Schools to Number of Disciplinary Referrals of Scotts Bluff County High School Juniors Who Attended Class II and Class III Elementary Schools

Group	Average	Standard Deviation
Class I	.27	.44
Class II	.15	.45

The difference between .27 and .15 is not significant, t (50) = 1.0, p > .05.

Disciplinary referrals for juniors who attended Class I elementary schools were averaged to be .27 with .44 being the variance. The average number of disciplinary referrals for juniors who attended Class II and Class III elementary schools was .15 with a variance of .45. Twenty juniors from Class I elementary schools had no disciplinary referrals, while twenty-four juniors from Class II and Class III elementary schools had no disciplinary referrals. Five from Class I background had one or two disciplinary referrals, and two from Class II and Class III backgrounds had one or two disciplinary referrals. One junior from a Class I school had three or more disciplinary referrals; however, no juniors from Class II and Class III schools had three or more disciplinary referrals. When the average number of

disciplinary referrals for each group was calculated, the difference was not significant.

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study involved twenty-six high school juniors who had attended elementary school in Class I school districts and another twenty-six Scotts Bluff County high school juniors, alphabetized and matched by I.Q.s, who had attended elementary school in Class II or Class III school districts. The purpose of the study was to compare the performance of juniors from Class I elementary schools to juniors from Class II and Class III elementary schools. The areas of concern were: 1) academics, 2) athletics, 3) leadership skills, 4) attendance, and 5) discipline. These areas were researched in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska with respondents being administrators from four high schools in that county.

A survey with questions pertaining to each area of concern was completed for each of the fifty-two Scotts Bluff County high school juniors involved in the study. The high school principal or superintendent supplied information about each student, as follows: 1) achievement test composite percentile score, 2) G.P.A., 3) participation in sports, 4) lettering in sports, 5) participation in school organizations, 6) holding office in school organizations, 7) attendance, 8) disciplinary referrals to principal of school disciplinarian. No student names were revealed to the

researcher.

The study researched areas of concern that have effect on the quality of education received by students in Class I school districts and by students in Class II and Class III school districts.

It was not the intention of the study for one group of students to be rated "higher" than the other. The purpose of the study was to determine if education in the two different classes of elementary schools affected the school perfo-rmance of juniors in Scotts Bluff County. The researcher concludes, by the responses to the Student Characteristic Surveys that there was no significant difference between the two groups in any of the areas of concern.

There was no significant difference in academic perfor-mance between the two groups. The researcher studied achievement test composite percentile scores of the two groups and G.P.A.s of the two groups. The average achieve-ment test composite percentiles of the juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools were computed and com-pared to the average achievenent test composite percentiles of juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elemen-tary schools. The independent-measure t test was used to analyze the results. Even though there were individual score differences, there was no significant difference be-tween the average composite percentile scores of the two

groups. The average G.P.A.s of the two groups were computed and compared, using the independent-measure t test to analyze the results. Again, there were individual G.P.A differences, but there was no significant difference between the average G.P.A.s of the two groups.

According to the results of the independent-measure t test as it pertained to the average composite percentile scores of both groups, as it pertained to average G.P.A.s of both groups, this researcher concludes that whether elementary education has taken place in smaller, rural Class I schools or in larger, urban Class II and Class III schools does not affect the academic performance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County.

There was no significant difference in athletic performance of the two groups. Sports participation of juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools and sports participation of juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools were computed and compared. Using the independent-measure t test to analyze the results, there was no significant difference between the average participation in sports of the two groups. The number of sports in which students from the two groups earned letters was also computed and compared, and again, using the independent-measure t test to analyze the results, there was no significant difference. This researcher concludes, as a result of ana-

lyzing average sports participation of both groups, and as a result of analyzing average earning of sports letters of both groups, that whether students attended Class I elementary schools or Class II and Class III elementary schools has no effect on their athletic performance as high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County.

The next area of concern studied was that of leadership skills of the two groups. The students' participation in school organizations and the number of offices held by those students in school organizations was studied. The independent-measure *t* test was used to analyze the results in both parts of this area of concern. It was found that there was no significant difference in either part; therefore, it was determined that there was no significant difference pertaining to leadership skills, as measured, between the two groups. Since no significant difference in leadership skills was determined, it is concluded by this investigator, that performance of leadership skills by Scotts Bluff County juniors does not depend on whether they attended Class I or Class II and Class III elementary schools.

The fourth area of concern studied was that of attendance. The number of days absent from school of juniors from Class I elementary schools was compared to the number of days absent of juniors from Class II and Class III elementary schools. The independent-measure *t* test was used to

analyze the results and no significant difference was determined. Due to the results of the independent-measure *t* test, as it pertained to attendance of high school juniors in Scotts Bluff County, it is determined by this investigator that whether their elementary education was in Class I schools or Class II and Class III schools has no effect.

Discipline was the final area of concern that was researched. The average number of disciplinary referrals to the principal or school disciplinarian of juniors who had attended Class I elementary schools was compared to the average number of disciplinary referrals of juniors who had attended Class II and Class III elementary schools. The independent-measure *t* test to analyze the results, and there was no significant difference between the two groups. This researcher concludes, therefore, that attendance in Class I elementary schools or attendance in Class II and Class III elementary schools has no effect on behavior, as measured by the number of disciplinary referrals, of Scotts Bluff County juniors.

In conclusion, based on the study of the five areas of concern: academics, athletics, leadership skills, attendance and discipline, it can be stated that no educational advantage or disadvantage exists between the Scotts Bluff County juniors educated in Class I elementary schools and their counterparts from Class II and Class III schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from this study:

1. Nebraska legislators need to look at this study and at similar studies as they estimate the wisdom of forced consolidation and reorganization.

2. Performance-based accreditation needs to be studied. (According to the results of this study the Class I schools are as educationally sound as Class II and Class III schools; but they often cannot provide the material items upon which accreditation is now based.)

3. Studies need to be conducted that would evaluate the students from Class I elementary schools and students from Class II and Class III elementary schools participation in community and civic organizations.

4. Studies need to be conducted comparing students from Class I elementary schools specifically to those from Class II elementary schools and specifically to those from Class III elementary schools.

5. More studies similar to this study need to be conducted within other counties of Nebraska.

APPENDIX

A. Letter to School Administrators

B. Student Characteristic Survey

APPENDIX A

Letter to School Administrators

February 6, 1989

Dear High School Administrator:

As a graduate student in Educational Administration at Kearney State College, Kearney, Nebraska, I am conducting a field study as part of the requirements for the Specialist Degree. The purpose of this study is to compare present juniors from Scottsbluff County who received elementary school education in Class I schools with juniors who received elementary school education in Class II and Class III schools.

I appreciate the fact that when we visited earlier you consented to participate in the study.

Attached is a Student Characteristic Survey. This instrument needs to be completed either by you or by a counsellor. Please complete one for each junior who received Class I elementary education, and please complete one for the same number of juniors who received Class II or CLass III elementary education. Please match them by alphabetizing the Class II or III group and matching to the Class I group by I. Q.

Please complete the survey and use the self-addressed, stamped envelope to return it to me by February 15. Thank you very much for your cooperation and time in helping me complete this study.

Sincerely yours,

La Rita Van Boskirk
1705 O Street
Gering, NE 69341

APPENDIX B

Student Characteristic Survey
(One per student surveyed--to be completed by High School Personnel)

1. This student is: Male_____ Female_____

2. Name of High School:_____

3. Type of elementary school that student attended through eighth grade:
Class I_____ Class II or Class III_____

4. Student's most recent high school achievement test composite percentile:_____

5. Student's GPA this year:_____ on a _____ scale

6a. In how many sports does the student participate this year?
0_____ 1_____ 2_____ 3_____ more than 3_____

6b. In how many sports has the student lettered?
0_____ 1_____ 2_____ 3_____ more than 3_____

7a. In how many school organizations does the student participate? (include all organizations except sports: i.e., arts, band, chorus, clubs, student council)
0-3_____ 4-7_____ 8-10_____ more than 10_____

7b. In how many school organizations does the student hold an office? (include all organizations including sports: i.e., class officer, student body officer, club officer, seasonal team captain)
0_____ 1-2_____ 3-4_____ more than 4_____

8. Please check the number of days the student was absent first semester 1988-89 school year.
0-3_____ 4-5_____ 6-8_____ more than 8_____

9. How many disciplinary referrals to the principal or school desciplinarian has the student had during the first semester of the 1988-89 school year? 0_____ 1-2_____ 3 or more _____

Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this study? Yes_____ No_____

NOTES

[1] Bruce D. Barker, "How Much Do We Know About Rural Education? What Do We Need To Find Out?" (Minnesota: Keynote Address at Minnesota Rural Education Association Conference, April 9-10, 1986), p. 5.

[2] Ibid., p. 6.

[3] Everett D. Edington and Lyle Kochler, "Rural Student Achievement: Elements for Comsideration," ERIC Digest. (New Mexico State University. 1987), p. 3.

[4] Leonard Gregory, "Rural Education, The Positive Experience," Neb/Cress (Kearney State College, Kearney, Nebraska. December 1988), p. 2.

[5] Ivan Muse, Kevin T. Ho and Ralph B. Smith, "A Study of the Performance of Students from Small Country Elementary Schools When They Attend High School, 1985." (Brigham Young University. 1985), p. 2.

[6] Ibid., pp. 17, 18.

[7] Howard Hanson "A Study of the Performance of Students Enrolled In High Schools In Lincoln County, Nebraska That Have Attended A Class I School," (Kearney, Nebraska, 1987), p. 23.

[8] Management Information Sermices Staff, Statistics and Facts about Nebraska Schools 1985-86, (Nebraska Department of Education Publication. Lincoln, Nebraska. 1986), p. 59.

[9] Barker, op. cit., p. 9.

[10] Ivan Muse, Bruce Barker and Ralph Smith, Rural Education In Colorado, (Brigham young University, 1983), p. 1.

[11] Edington, op. cit., p. 1.

[12] Ibid., p. 4.

[13] John Clarke and Ken Hood, "School Inprovement in a Rural State," Educational Leadership, (Alexandria, Virginia, ASCO September 1986), p. 80.

[14] Edington, op. cit., p. 4.

[15] Barker, op. cit., p. 11.

[16] Darrell Jensen and Lois Widvey, "The South Dakota Small Schools Cluster," Rural-Educator, (n.p. Fall 1986), p. 7.

[17] Robert Carlson, A Case Study of the Implementation Process or How a Rural Elementary School Makes a Difference, (Vermont University. Burlington Center for Evaluation and Policy Research, 1985), p. 9.

[18] Jerry G. Horn, "A Study of the Perceived Effectiveness of Kansas Small Schools," (Kansas State University, Manhattan Center for Rural Education and Small Schools, 1987), p. 1.

[19] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

[20] Ibid., p. 46.

[21] Muse, op. cit. p. 17.

[22] Hanson, op. cit. p. 15.

[23] Ibid., p. 23.

[24] Muse, op. cit. pp. 2-3.

[25] Hanson, op. cit. p. 53.

[26] Ibid., pp. 53-54, 56.

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